



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY! Did you know young men and women in the Middle Ages drew names from a bowl to see who would be their Valentine? They would wear this name pinned onto their sleeves for one week for everyone to see. This was the origin of the expression "to wear your heart on your sleeve."

AZEBO EXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • FEBRUARY 2016

TOWN-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Town Council, School District sign agreement to fund \$2 million in major school improvements

The Town Council made history in January when its members voted unanimously to share \$2 million of its Economic Development Income Tax proceeds with the Highland schools.

The net effect: a \$100,000 property tax break for residents and businesses for the next 20 years.

It is believed to be the first time in Indiana a municipal government has shared its income tax collections with a school district.

School Superintendent Brian Smith said he couldn't have been more pleased when informal discussions were solidified.

"It all started with a casual discussion last year that focused on the capital needs of the schools between School Board member Carol Green-Fraley and Councilman Mark Herak," Smith said. "That led to formal discussions between Council members, who came up with a plan."

Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin said his public finance research showed Indiana law allows for the sharing of income tax collections and the town attorney agreed.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project will involve all four elementary school buildings, the middle school and the high school. The improvements include:

- ✓ Two of the elementary school buildings will be rewired for satellite reception.
- ✓ All the buildings will be wired with enhanced networking capabilities. Each student will then receive an iPad.
- ✓ Each building will get modern environmental systems and more than \$1 million in new windows will be installed.



"As far as we know, there is no community that is using CEDIT proceeds to help fund a capital project in the schools," Griffin said. "The school town has embarked on a major capital initiative. Ultimately, that plan to upgrade technology and improve school buildings is good for everyone in town. There is no us or them. The council made a decision based on what is best for Highland and all of the taxpayers in town." 🍷

COUNTY LAND BANK

Highland has been invited to become part of a fledgling effort to develop vacant properties.

Led by the Northwest Indiana Reinvestment Alliance, each municipality in Lake County is allowed one representative on the Lake County Land Bank.

Land Banks are created to acquire, hold, manage and develop vacant properties. Land Banks aim to convert vacant properties that have been neglected by the open market into productive use, thereby transforming neighborhood liabilities into assets.

FIRE RESCUE VEHICLE

The Town Council approved the purchase of a special fire rescue vehicle that replaces an outdated unit in the fleet. The cost: \$399,999 — a bargain in the fire-fighting community. Huntington Bank of Indianapolis, which offered the lowest rate, will provide financing at 2 percent interest over five years.



... TOWN TICKER ...

Highland Parks and Rec is offering sponsorship opportunities at the **Lincoln Community Center Fieldhouse** and the **Sharp Athletic Complex**. Both venues have high traffic during special events, sports programs and tournaments. **INFO:** email dbyers@highland.in.gov.

SCHOOLS, POLICE ALWAYS PREPARED IN CASE OF THREATS

A caller threatening harm to Highland High School students if not given \$2,000 probably didn't know this is the kind of scenario police and school leaders train for each year.

Known as rapid deployment in police circles, the year-round preparation meant that a squadron of Highland police were on site at the same time Superintendent Brian Smith was getting a call alerting him to the threat.

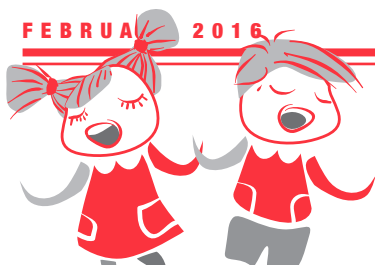
"The call came in to the police department — not to the schools," Smith said.

"Within a minute, officers were in the front and back of the building and we were on lockdown. That was in addition to Sgt. Mike O'Donnell, who is on site every day."

Smith said he is thankful for the partnership that predates his tenure as superintendent.

"I am grateful for the long-standing collaboration we have with Highland police. It is a partnership that has worked well for more than a decade," he said. "We never take these threats lightly when it comes to the safety of our students and neither do they." 🍷

INSIDE: Although Highland had one homicide and one rape in 2015, overall criminal activity is down. **SEE FULL REPORT, PAGE 2**



YOUTH CHORUS AUDITIONS

Does your child's school lack a music class, or do you simply want them to have extra opportunities to enrich their talent and make musical memories?

Our skilled music educators offer instruction in solo vocal techniques and valuable experience in choral singing.

Northwest Indiana Youth Chorus invites singers aged 6-18 to audition by appointment for our fall season.

NIYC rehearses Monday evenings at Lincoln Center in preparation for two concerts, one in December and one in May. The chorus also participates in local festivals, musical theatre and liturgical activities.

INFO: For more info or to schedule an audition, contact Dr. Bonita Neff at (219) 629-5448 or bdnneff@iun.edu.



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NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

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2015 CRIME IN HIGHLAND

OVERALL CRIMINAL ACTIVITY DOWN

Nonviolent Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) continued their downward trend in 2015 led by a dramatic reduction in burglaries.

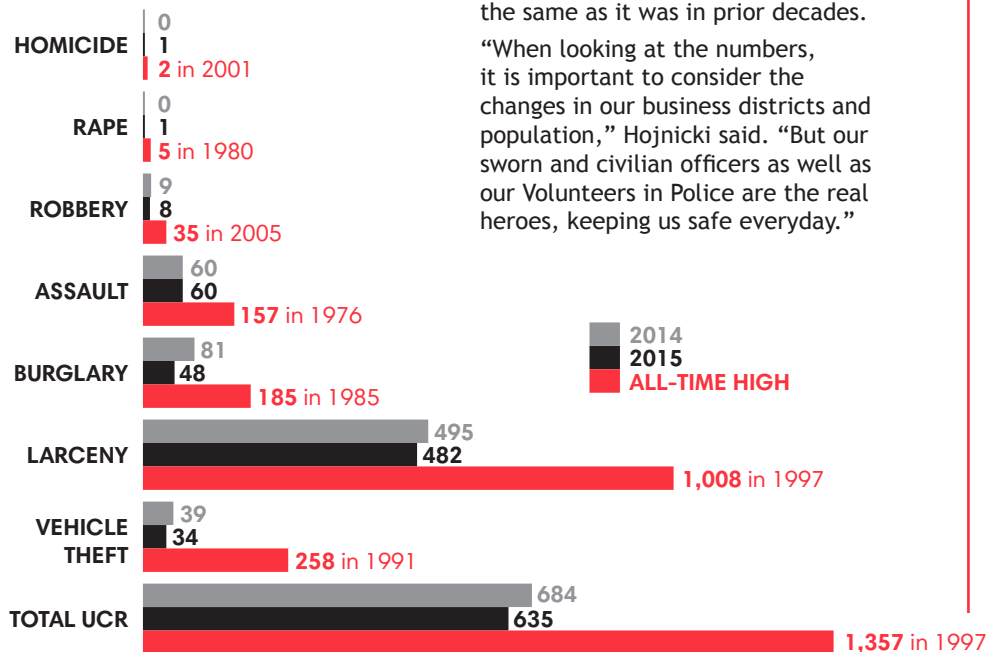
"Sadly, a single homicide and one rape occurred," Highland Police Chief Pete Hojnicky said. "The perpetrators of both incidents were charged immediately following the crime."

Interestingly, the number of assaults last year was the same as 2014.

Police visibility coupled with a strong neighborhood watch deters crime.

"Our records go back to 1970. It is fascinating to see how criminal activity has fluctuated over the past 45 years," Hojnicky said. "In many cases, criminal activity in 2015 is either substantially lower or remains the same as it was in prior decades."

"When looking at the numbers, it is important to consider the changes in our business districts and population," Hojnicky said. "But our sworn and civilian officers as well as our Volunteers in Police are the real heroes, keeping us safe everyday."



THEATRE NAMED BICENTENNIAL LEGACY PROJECT

The Town Theatre has the state's stamp of approval as a Bicentennial Legacy Project.

The designation, which arrived in January, allows the town to embellish all official correspondence, advertising and promotion with the 2016 Indiana Bicentennial logo. The theatre will also be listed on the state's bicentennial website.

"It is an honor to have the Town Theatre listed as a Bicentennial Legacy Project," Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said. "This is the kind of designation that will continue to promote our theatre long after the bicentennial has ended."

In the growing list of legacy projects, the Town Theatre joins a host of projects, events and activities that have a state history component.

The Highland Redevelopment Commission applied for legacy project status in 2015. All projects approved for the status must be:

- ✓ Open and accessible to the public
- ✓ Relevant to Indiana and the bicentennial
- ✓ Fundable without bicentennial commission support
- ✓ Achievable

"We are pleased the Bicentennial Commission considers the Town Theatre worthy of the honor," Petro said. "This award could lead to an increase in tourism once the theatre is complete and assist in our efforts to attract grant funding to offset the cost of the project." 🎭

Looking for Highland's first ... POET LAUREATE

Are you known by friends and family to have a flair for free-flowing prose like Jack Kerouac? Maybe, Shakespearean sonnets crafted in perfect iambic pentameter are more your style.

If you have a penchant for poetry and are a resident of this charming community we call home, Highland Main Street wants to talk to you.

Highland is looking to name a very special resident as its first poet laureate while creating an environment where poetry can flourish.

"The Poet Laureate will serve as an ambassador for the community's vibrant artistic and literary life, promoting the literary community and celebrating the written word," Main Street member Julie Larson said. "All candidates must be willing to collaborate with other town poets and artists to develop and present poetry-related activities that address the objectives of the Poet Laureate Program."

With a goal to have a Poet Laureate in place yet this year, Highland will become one of only a handful of communities in the country to have a recognized poetic wordsmith in their midst.

An interesting tidbit: Of the nearly 200 countries in the world, only a dozen or so have designated a poet laureate to create fashioned prose that adds a pomp and ceremony that no other word form seems able to do.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations are due **March 15**. Details about the program and the application process are available at town hall or highland.in.gov.



TIME TO REGISTER FOR KINDERGARTEN

The public elementary schools will hold kindergarten registration the week of March 14. Parents are urged to bring their children and the items listed below to the school that serves their immediate district according to the following schedule:

8:45 – 11 AM:
Last names "A" through "J"

12:15 – 2:30 PM:
Last names "K" through "Z"

MONDAY, MARCH 14
Johnston Elementary School
8220 Fifth St. • (219) 923-2428

TUESDAY, MARCH 15
Merkley Elementary School
9340 Fifth St. • (219) 922-5640

THURSDAY, MARCH 17
Warren Elementary School
2901 100th St. • (219) 922-5660

FRIDAY, MARCH 18
Southridge Elementary School
9221 Johnston St. • (219) 922-5650

AGE REQUIREMENT: Students must be 5 years of age on or before Aug. 1, 2016

ITEMS NEEDED FOR REGISTRATION:

1. Five proofs of residency

Two of the following: NIPSCO, water, phone, cable (utility bills/deposit receipts)

Two of the following: Driver's license/state ID showing current address, vehicle registration, recent paycheck/unemployment check receipt.

One of the following: Lease and rent receipt, mortgage and homeowners insurance documents, notarized letter with three proofs of residency from the homeowner (parent/guardian must provide ID listed above)

2. Proof of custody, if applicable
3. Birth certificate
4. Social security number
5. Current immunization records (name and phone number of pediatrician)

NEW RESTAURANTS, CAFES CHANGING DOWNTOWN LANDSCAPE

There's an international taste explosion going on — right here in downtown Highland. From plump, hearty Polish dumplings to flaky Peruvian meat pies — known as empanadas — and pollo saltado with mayakoba beans, the downtown is filled with the aroma of bold spices and off-the-chart flavors.

The new offerings are emanating from a pair of buildings that back up to one another — Dan's Pierogies at 2945 Jewett St. and Maritza's Cafe at 2934 Highway. As fate — or luck — would have it, Dan's Pierogies found a home in the space that Maritza's Cafe vacated when husband-and-wife restaurateurs Maritza and Anthony

Fenyves decided to take over the former Niko's Cafe — combining Maritza's and Anthony's into one restaurant offering traditional American breakfasts alongside their Peruvian and Italian fusion favorites.

INFO: Find both restaurants on Facebook. For Dan's Pierogies, call (219) 513-8740. For Martiza's Cafe, call (219) 838-4700.

TREAT DECORATING WORKSHOP

Create a variety of sweet treats with Cathy of Cookielicious Bakery. All supplies are included.

KIDS AGES 5-15: 5 p.m. **FEB. 9.** Valentine's cake pops. \$15 residents / \$18 nonresidents

ADULTS AGES 16+: 6:30 p.m. **FEB. 9.** Cookies. \$18 residents / \$22 nonresidents

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

INFO: highlandparks.org or (219) 838-0114.

BABE RUTH & TRAVEL LEAGUE

It's time to register for the new Highland Babe Ruth and Travel League for the following divisions: Babe Ruth and Senior League.

BABE RUTH: Ages 13 to 15

SENIOR LEAGUE: Ages 16 to 19

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. **FEB. 13 and 27**

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

NOTE: Players MUST turn 13 by April 30, 2016 or 19 after December 31, 2015 and reside in Lake County. Birth certificate and proof of residency are required at registration.

INFO: Call President Dan Vassar at (219) 924-1945 or e-mail highlandbaberuth@yahoo.com.

HIGHLAND LITTLE LEAGUE

Boys and girls can register now for the following Little League divisions: T-Ball, Rookie, Minor B, Minor A, Majors.

LEAGUE AGES: 4 to 12

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. **FEB. 6 and 20**

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

NOTE: Players MUST turn 4 by August 31, 2016 and reside or go to school in Highland. Birth certificate and proof of residency are required.

REGISTRATION: Forms online at highlandll.com.

INFO: Call HLL President Bob Johnsen at (219) 718-1236 or email info@highlandll.com.

HIGHLAND GIRLS SOFTBALL

Spring and summer sports seasons are just a few short months away and sign-ups are scheduled for the following age divisions: 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U and 18U.

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. **FEB. 6 and 20**

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

REGISTRATION FEE: \$70 includes yard sign, team shirt, shorts, socks and tournament shirt. \$20 raffle fee reimbursed by selling tickets.

NOTE: All equipment is provided by the league except for a required glove. Rubber spikes are recommended, but not required.

INFO: Visit highlandgirlssoftball.org.

ADULT SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Registration begins this month for the summer adult softball season, April 17 to Aug. 25. Rosters are limited to 20 players.

15-GAME SEASON & SINGLE-ELIM. TOURNAMENT

TEAM FEE: \$700 due by **MARCH 31**

14-GAME SEASON

TEAM FEE: \$560 due by **MARCH 31**

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

INFO: highlandparks.org or (219) 838-0114.

Community Garage Sale

Do you have items you would like to resell, but don't want to invite people into your home to show your products? Rent a booth space at one of Highland Parks & Recreation's garage sales. Roger Parker from P & P Collectibles will promote his Card & Comic Show in conjunction with the garage sale.

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, **FEBRUARY 27**

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

VENDOR FEES: A 10' x 10' interior space is \$32.10. A 23' x 6' wall space is \$53.50. Booth space selection is first come, first served.

RESERVATIONS: Must be made at Park Office, 2450 Lincoln St.

INFO: Call (219) 838-0114.



MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade residents of Highland or students attending a Highland school are invited to participate in the Middle School Basketball League. League format will be determined by registration numbers. Everyone receives a team T-shirt. The first-place team receives champion T-shirts. Teams will be chosen through a player draft with the coaches.

WHEN: Wednesday nights, **MARCH 30 - JUNE 1**

PRACTICE BEGINS: First week in March

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

FEE: \$50 per player

REGISTRATION: Deadline is **FEB. 23**

ONLINE ACTIVITY CODE: 133002

NOTE: There will be a Mandatory Skills Assessment from 6:45 to 8 p.m. **FEB. 24** in the Lincoln Community Center Field House.

INFO: highlandparks.org or (219) 838-0114.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Highland students are invited to participate in the High School Basketball League. League format will be determined by registration numbers. Everyone receives a team T-shirt. The first place team will receive champion T-shirts.

NEW THIS YEAR: Participants will sign up as individuals and teams will be chosen through a player draft with the coaches.

WHEN: Wednesday nights, **MARCH 30 - JUNE 1**

WHERE: Lincoln Community Center

FEE: \$50 per person

REGISTRATION: Deadline is **MARCH 1**

ONLINE ACTIVITY CODE: 133003

NOTE: There will be a Mandatory Skills Assessment from 6:45 to 8 p.m. **MARCH 2** in the Lincoln Community Center Field House.

INFO: highlandparks.org or (219) 838-0114.